cubic metres of fuel wood, valued at about Rs. 10,000 crores, are annually wasted due to faulty logging techniques and that about 24 per cent of the total forest area classified as potentially exploitable is not being exploited for the lack of infrastrucural development as reported in the 'Indian Express' dated May 7, 1986; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and to what extent the national economy is likely to gain if the 24 per cent land is also exploited?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI): (a) It is not a fact that 5 million cubic metres of industrial wood and 18 million cubic metres of fuel wood, valued at Rs. 10,000 crores are wasted annually due to faulty logging techniques.

(b) There are no plans to increase forest areas under exploitation because of conservation needs, which outweigh purely economic gains.

Spy activities in Gujarat oilfields

*408. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent revealing information in an open letter of the Nationalist Citizen Forum New Delhi and if so, whether this is being investigated; and

(b) whether Government are also aware of the earlier very serious disclosures by a senior Government servant regarding the spy activities in Gujarat oilfields centred round dubious foreign aided projects at Anand Butteroil Depots etc.?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) With regard to part (a) of the Question, in the absence of specific particulars such as the date, the name of the addresses etc. it has not been possible to have any clear idea about the 'open letter of the Nationalist Citizen Forum, New Delhi'. As regards part (b) of the question, the matter appears to pertain to an article published in the International Courier of March, 1985. The allegation could not however, be substantiated.

Increasing number of weapons and firearms with citizens

*409. SHRI THANGABAALU: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the context of the recent riots in different parts of the country Government are contemplating measures to reduce the level and the number of private weapons like knives, daggers and firearms with the public; and

(b) whether the Central Government propose to take up with the States the issue of increasing number of weapons and firearms for the citizens in some States?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) The Central Government have been seriously concerned with the commission of offences with the help of arms|firearms. A number of measures have been initiated in order to ensure that possession of firearms is permitted only in case of bonafide needs such as sports|self-production. In order to achieve this objective, the following measures have been taken.

(i) Under the Arms Act and Rules, the State Governments|Union Territories and their officers are the licensing authorities for grant of possssion licences for arms and firearms. By the Arms (Amendment) Act, 1983 (25 of 1983) the maxixmum number of firearms a person can possess has been restricted.

(ii) Police verification has been made mandatory before grant of licence by insertion of new Section 13(2) by Arms (Amendment) Act, 1983 (25 of 1983).

(iii) To tackle the situation in disturbed areas, section 24-A for prohibition as to possession of notified arms in disturbed areas and Section 24-B for prohibition as to carrying of notified arms in or through public places in disturbed areas have been incorporated in

the Act by the Arms (Amendment) Act, 1983 (25 of 1983). Powers under these Sections have also been delegated to States|Union Territories.

(iv) So far as acquisition|possession|carrying of knives and daggers is concerned, the State Governments|Union Territories have already been delegated powers to impose restrictions under Section 4 of the Arms Act, 1959 as and when the situation requires.

(v) The State Governments|Union Territories were advised to carry out investigation|prosecution of theft|loss of arms and ammunition from licensees and to follow up the cases vigorously.

Reported violation of Wildlife Act by Assam

*410. SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE:
SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the'Times of India' of 29th June, 1986 under the caption "Assam violating wildlife Act";

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A statement is attached.

Statement

According to Section 12 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as amended in 1982 (23 of 1982), for scientific research or management of an area the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State may issue a permit for capture of any wild animal specified in Schedule I of the Act, with the previous permission of the Central Government. The Indian elephant is in Schedule I of the Act and the State Government of Assam had applied to the Central Government for permission to capture elephants. The matter was examined by the Indian Board for Wildlife and it was decided that the State Government be given permission to capture a hundred elephants in the year 1985-86, subject to certain conditions. The most important amongst these were that a detailed plan of capture would be drawn up in advance and sent to the Central Government whose nominee would also be associated with the capture operations; that the existing habitats of the elephants would be effectively protected; the captured elephants would be used by the Government and not sold off and that private parties would not be involved in the capture, as otherwise the elephants that would be captured may well be those which are young and amenable for training purposes and not those which are primarily responsible for damage to life and property.

This was conveyed to the State Government of Assam but no response was received and no permission was therefore given. However, report has been received that the State Government of Assam has permitted private parties to capture elephants by the mela shikar or noose capture method, resulting in the capture of 90 wild elephants and that the majority of these animals are being allowed to be retained by the private parties.

The Prime Minister wrote to the Chief Minister of Assam in April, 1986, pointing out the violation of law and of the resolution of the Indian Board of Wildlife. As yet no reply has been received to this letter.

Prices of Garlic

*411. CHOWDHARY RAM SEWAK: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently the prices of Garlic have risen very high in Delhi;

(b) if so, what is the present ruling prices of Garlic in Delhi and in other Metropolitan cities of India; and